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## *Józef Wieniawski – Ferenc Liszt. Concert etude examined from the perspective of the genre*

**ABSTRACT:** The cycle *24 Etudes in All Major and Minor Keys* op. 44 by Józef Wieniawski (1837-1912) demonstrates the essential unity of the virtuoso and the composer in a dynamic process of transforming the genre. This played an important part in providing innovative solutions not only in relation to piano-playing, but also in its significant influence on the development of texture, diversification of the instrumental sound and the expansion of means of musical expression in nineteenth-century piano music. Wieniawski, following *Transcendental etudes* or *Concert etudes* by Liszt, whose pupil he was in Weimar, blurs the boundaries between improvisation and composition; he draws attention to the unique nature of interpretation, its singularity and the specificity of the moment in time when the work is performed. Continuing the tradition of the grand cyclic form as a special kind of *universum*, he implements the concept of diversity in unity. The 24 characteristic miniatures reveal contextual links, intra-musical relationships, and the quest for individual solutions. This problematic concerns issues such as symbolic references, which lead one to an extensive catalogue of expressive qualities.

**KEYWORDS:** Józef Wieniawski, archetypes, genre, concert etude, pianism, virtuosity, cyclic form, expression, topoi

The works of Józef Wieniawski (1837-1912) as a composer, pianist and conductor, his teaching and organizational activities, have not to date aroused a special interest either among scholars or artists.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps 2012, the centenary year of the death of this forgotten Polish composer offers an opportunity to undertake research on the source materials of his comprehensive and impressive artistic output.

Among dozens of compositions, the series: *24 Etudes in All Major and Minor Keys*, Op. 44 by Józef Wieniawski, published in 1889 in Brussels,<sup>2</sup> deserves attention for a number of important reasons.

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<sup>1</sup> The gap is filled by the most recent publication of Irena Poniatowska's study on the history of Polish music of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: *Twórczość muzyczna w drugiej połowie XIX wieku* [Music in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century] [In the series:] *Historia muzyki polskiej. Romantyzm*. [The History of Polish Music. The Romantic Era] Part Two A: 1850-1900. (Warsaw: Sutkowski Edition, 2010), 284-340 (Chapter: *Fortepianowa muzyka* [Piano music]).

<sup>2</sup> Józef Wieniawski, *24 Études de mécanisme et de style dans tous les tons majeurs et mineurs pour piano* (Brussels: Schott Frères, c. 1889).

Firstly, Wieniawski's rich legacy of piano music continues to be virtually absent from artistic repertoires as well as from scientific discussion. Moreover, specific editions of his compositions are difficult to find in the library collections of Polish music institutions.

Secondly, the series in question reveals an essential unity of the virtuoso and the composer in a dynamic process of transformation of the concert etude. This genre played an important role in the development of innovative solutions not only relating to the piano; it also had a significant impact on the development of the texture, the diversification of instrumental sound and the expansion of means of musical expression in 19<sup>th</sup> century piano music.

Thirdly, it demonstrates the impact of the creativity and artistic personality of Liszt, who, along with Chopin, was the most prominent composer of this genre. In addition, as we know, Liszt was bound to Józef Wieniawski, and his older brother Henry with whom he performed in public, by artistic ties. Henry, alongside Juliusz Zarębski and Karl Tausig, was among the most famous Polish followers of Liszt. Thus, he played a leading role in creating the piano school which had a very wide resonance throughout Europe. His art of interpretation and pedagogical skills brought him great respect and universal recognition, as evidenced by the invitations to and engagements at the renowned conservatories of Moscow, Paris and Brussels.

Wieniawski, musically gifted, had an extraordinary ability to read notes *a prima vista*; he could also instantly transpose any piece of music to any key; endowed with a phenomenal memory for music, not only did he play solo but also chamber repertoire from memory (e.g. during concerts with Pablo Sarasate), understandably causing a sensation. He was one of the first pianists in the world to perform at his recitals all the etudes by Fryderyk Chopin. He had a vast repertoire, in which, in addition to works by Chopin, Liszt's compositions (including both concertos and works for piano and orchestra) played an important role.<sup>3</sup> In the archives of the Berlin Philharmonic there is a programme of a concert with Wieniawski, which took place on 21 January 1892. During the evening Wieniawski performed three piano concertos: Johann Sebastian Bach's *Concerto in D minor*, Henry Charles Litolf's *Symphonic Concerto No. 3 in E flat major* and Franz Liszt's *Concerto in A major*, as well as solo pieces by Hans Büllow, Johannes Brahms, Stanisław Moniuszko, Franz Schubert and his own compositions. The orchestra also presented his dramatic overture *Wilhelm Milczek* and the symphonic poem *Orpheus* by Liszt.

In the diverse compositional output of Wieniawski, covering almost seventy opuses, we find, among others: his youthful *Tarantella in E minor*, Op. 4, dedicated to Liszt, clearly revealing a fascination with the style and pianism of the famous composer. Moreover, in 1858, continuing the ideas of Chopin and Liszt, he composed a monumental, four-part *Piano Sonata in B minor*, Op. 22, published in Paris in 1863.

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<sup>3</sup> Stanisław Dybowski, „Wieniawski Józef”, in: *Słownik pianistów polskich* [Dictionary of Polish Pianists] (Warszawa: Selene, 2003), 730-736.

Interestingly, and purely by coincidence, there is a similarity in the debut moment of both composers: Liszt, eleven years old, wrote a *Variation in C major on a Waltz by Anton Diabelli*, published in the famous collection of *Vaterländischer Künstlerverein*; Wieniawski, at the same age of eleven, composed with his brother Henry and performed in Paris in 1848, *Allegro de Sonate*, Op. 2.

In the history of piano music, Chopin, Schumann, Liszt and Brahms not only saved the honour of the etude genre, but also brought it to the rank of a concert work and to the level of a masterwork. It is particularly clearly apparent in the context of the bankruptcy of mass production of etudes and exercises, which were written for a wide range of undemanding customers (for example, in Paris, sources from 1845 indicate the number of pianos to have been 60,000, which converts into one instrument for every 5 households and into a 100,000 people who played the piano). Such a social situation, according to Jeffrey Kallberg,<sup>4</sup> created an increasing need for new repertoire to perform, not only for the artists of the highest rank, but above all for a wide range of music-making enthusiasts. It carried great opportunities for a vigorous growth of piano pedagogy, which is also evident in the abundant, second-rate, salon composing creations of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The turbulent transformation of the genre is first and foremost testimony to 'a composer-performer culture', as defined by Jim Samson.<sup>5</sup> It also has a very important place in the Polish music of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when pianism wrote its golden pages: the piano works of Maria Szymanowska (1790-1831), Józef Nowakowski (1800-1865), Wojciech Sowiński (1803-1880), Fryderyk Chopin (1810-1849), Edward Wolff (1816-1880), Antoni Kątski (1817-1899), Teodor Leszetycki (1830-1915), Józef Wieniawski (1837-1912), Karol Tausig (1841-1871), Aleksander Michałowski (1851-1938), Juliusz Zarębski (1854-1885), Henryk Pachulski (1859-1921), Zygmunt Stojowski (1869-1949), Leopold Godowski (1870-1938) and many other great artists.

For Liszt, the etude turned out to be a particular and, one might say, a very personal genre. Three, distant in time, versions of the *Transcendental Etudes*, two versions of the *Etudes according to Paganini* and two opuses of *Concert Etudes* allow us to examine from slightly different perspectives the role and function of the genre. Pianistic virtuosity and the issues contained in it express a close and multifaceted relationship between the objective status of a musical work and its artistic performance as an event, even an artistic creation typical of a theatre performance.

These briefly signalled issues determine the four basic areas for further research on the genre under discussion:

1. the score of a piece as a text;

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<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey Kallberg, "Introduction to the Series", in: *Piano Music of the Parisian Virtuosos 1810-1860. A Ten-Volume Anthology*, ed. Jeffrey Kallberg (New York-London: Routledge, 1993), vii-xix.

<sup>5</sup> Jim Samson, *Virtuosity and the Musical Work. The "Transcendental Studies" of Liszt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3-4.

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*p*

*p f con bravura*

*cresc.*

*rit.* *e* *dim.*

S. F. 3973\*

Example 1. Józef Wieniawski, *Etude E major*, no. 9, b. 48-70

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The musical score consists of six systems of music. The first system begins with a *molto rall.* marking and a *ff* dynamic. The second system features a *dim.* marking. The third system includes a *cresc.* marking and a *ff* dynamic. The fourth system has a *fff* dynamic and a *pp trem.* marking. The fifth system is marked *religioso* and *rit.*. The sixth system includes a *p* dynamic, a *pp* dynamic, and an *estinto ppp* marking. The score is signed "S. F. 3973" at the bottom.

Example 2. Józef Wieniawski, *Etude C-sharp minor*, no. 10, b. 66-90

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11<sup>me</sup> Étude

dédiée à Monsieur VLADIMIR de PACHMANN.

Tempo giusto, con gran eleganza.

*p marcato il canto*

Example 3. Józef Wieniawski, *Etude B major*, no. 11, b. 1-7

*tranquillo* 27

*dim.*

*contemplativo pp*

*Ped.*

*dim.*

*estinto*

*ppp*

*Ped.*

Example 4. Józef Wieniawski, *Etude B-flat minor*, no. 16, b. 57-74

2. the instrument that is subject to technical improvements, generating new opportunities for performing and composing;
3. the function of a pianist-composer as a performer of a musical work;
4. the expanding public space of concerts and the influence that piano repertoire then has on the nature of the musical genre.

In an era of fascination with the mechanics of instruments, the etude underwent a profound transformation, from being a typical exercise, somewhat schematic and uniform in its origins, to representing highly individualized solutions. It was Chopin, Schumann and Liszt who, on the basis of this genre, personalized the technique by achieving the transition from a purely formulaic form to the sphere of spirituality, poetics and the quest for freedom. This dichotomy is clearly apparent in the title of Wieniawski's Etudes, which points to these two aspects: mechanistic and expressive.

The nature of Liszt's etudes was shaped, among other things, by the fact that at that time performance practice was often more important than the value of the work itself or how innovative it was. What made it all the more so was the fact that listening to music then was completely different from our present customs. In an era of romantic virtuosity, it was the performer and his style of playing that was the centre of attention; sometimes the stage performance was more interesting for the audience than the work itself. Liszt lifted the etude genre out of the closed private or semi-private space to the expanding (also in terms of quantity) public space with its many social contexts, including those of the repertoire.<sup>6</sup> In a public space, the pianist played the main role in the performance, in which the music was not only listened to, but also watched. The essence of the artistic performance of a piece could, undoubtedly, be found in the charismatic personality of Liszt as a pianist. Listeners probably heard not only what was actually played, but what was imagined, the romantic vision imposed by the artist, also by means of poetic, non-musical titles that Liszt gave only to the final versions of his works. The gesture language of *Transcendental* and *Concert Etudes* became an integral part of the romantic interpretation; in a sense, the piano was for Liszt, a conductor and a symphonist, a successful substitute for the whole orchestra and its palette of different colors. Speaking about his own performances, especially recitals, Liszt often emphasized his profound and inspirational relationship with the instrument, and with its expressive potential. Undoubtedly, among all other forms of musical activity, it was the piano which constituted the meaning of his creative life.

The choreography of playing, the visualization of a musical work, showing the formal structure with gestures and expressive body language, and even the simulation of *vibrato* effect on long sounds, also emphasized by Charles Rosen<sup>7</sup> – was

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., [Chapter: *Composing the performance*], 66-79.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Rosen, *Piano Notes. The Hidden World of the Pianist* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 30-31.



a consequence, among other things, of the transition from the finger technique of the famous Czerny art school to what is called the body technique. Thus, many aspects of the structure of a composition could not only be played, but be shown and form a kind of game played with the listener 'watching' the music as a spectacle. As pointed out by Rosen, gesture language became an indispensable part of the interpretation process.

In this sense, Józef Wieniawski's Etudes, like those by Liszt, express the essence of the genre – its archetype of a purely technical, physical exertion, a performance bravado. As in the case of Liszt, this also applies to the slow parts or cadences of *Adagio con espressione* type, performances of prelude introductions and intermezzi located in the extreme registers of the instrument, crossing hands, distant leaps, fierce octave marches, pauses and sudden suspensions during the musical narrative, accents, bold and extremely divergent dynamic contrasts *ppp-fff*. Here, Wieniawski's discoveries in terms of their application, arising from his concert practice, turned out to be relevant and highly individual, such as distinctive vocal and violin phrasing, as well as pedal work allowing the instrument to produce sustained notes and resonance. It seems to me that the issue of performance in the composing process was fundamental for Wieniawski. It resulted both from his soloist practice and from many years of making music together with his brother and many other prominent artists of the period, as well as from participating in chamber music, which he practiced from an early age. It might be that the expression and technique of violin playing added a characteristic feature to Wieniawski's artistic personality; we see something similar in Paganini's influence on many of Liszt's compositions.

In this context, another aspect appears to be of paramount importance for the development of the genre. The three versions of the Etudes by Liszt, mentioned above, closely studied by Samson,<sup>8</sup> provide evidence of the relationship between the virtuoso and the composer. They show a prolonged process of crystallization of a perfect symbiosis and unity of both romantic heroes, beginning with the early, youthful compositions by Liszt the pianist, until his mature works, recomposed in a search for their musical meaning, penetrating to the essence of music in a natural way through the pianism and the performance experience.

Let us note that in Liszt, whose pupil he was in Weimar, Wieniawski found the perfect model of the symbiosis between the composer and the instrument. Liszt thought above all with his fingers and the keyboard. Thus the language he spoke by means of the piano was his primary, basic musical language. Making a public display of his virtuoso gestures alongside the depths of poetic reverie, the trivial *Chromatic Gallop* next to such outstanding works as *Sonata in B minor*, public concerts for several thousand listeners and an intimate sphere to play in private, for Liszt all these were parts of the same composing process and they shaped his

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<sup>8</sup> Samson, *Virtuosity and the Musical Work*.

brilliant tonal intuition. And just like the transcriptions and paraphrases of other genres (opera, symphony, song), the styles of other individual artists all created yet another musical dialect used by the composer. Finally, one needs to add his translations into music of the languages of other forms of art such as literature and painting, as well as those of philosophy and nature. They were all concentrated in one genre and in one instrument, and spurred him on to try to go beyond the boundaries of the piano in search of its transcendental dimension. The aspiration to transcend the barriers of what is defined by the human dimension, echoing the Faustian motif, expresses the condition of Liszt the virtuoso, the unpredictable artist, spontaneous and individual, special and unique<sup>9</sup> and, in a sense, alone in his endeavours.

The idea of piano virtuosity, one of the principal values in the world of romanticism, formed the etudes by Wieniawski as a study in perfection. The concept of perfection, associated in particular with the commitment to excellence, to the perfect technical as well as artistic performance, applied to all music categories in the process of piano interpretation to equally high degree.<sup>10</sup> The notation of Liszt's Etudes confirms the fundamental role of virtuosity, but does so in a limited way, in other words – indirectly. The same observation applies to the Etudes by Wieniawski – the text contains many areas where the notation is imprecise, leaving the performer a huge space for personal, creative imagination to support the text of the composition. It includes such qualities of musical language as:

1. a wide range of tempo *rubato*, arising from formation and notation for both hands;
2. frequent agogic changes of the type: *Allegro*– *Adagio* – *Presto*;
3. extra-metric cadences;
4. dynamic gradations of a maximally wide range;
5. different timbre qualities, resulting from kinds of texture;
6. fingering, affecting the kind of sound in the obtained sound structure;
7. ways of phrasing and types of shaping the course of musical narration;
8. kinds of musical expression.

Wieniawski, following in the footsteps of Liszt, draws a thin line between improvisation and composition, focusing his attention on the uniqueness of interpretation, its individuality and specificity of the performance time on stage. This feature can be seen not only in the ornamental sphere and in the scale of technical gestures, but also in the organization of musical time, changes and contrasts in tempos, the use of general pauses, clearly articulated opposition of movement of rush and moments of stillness, static narration and deep reflection, leading the sound to die out in space.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Irena Poniatowska, *Chopin – człowiek i jego muzyka* [Chopin – The Man and His Music], (Warsaw: Multico, 2010), 162.

However, it should be noted that it is only in the Etudes by Liszt that we find such unique polarization between the work understood as a text and the work as a performance. For Liszt, this individualized interpretation became a manifestation of his freedom and independence, standing in opposition to the medium of collective, orchestral playing, where subjectivity and freedom to improvise are inevitably highly limited.

We need to recall two formal aspects of the Etudes, as they are crucial for further development of the genre. While the main idea of the music in Liszt's Etudes was determined by the nature of the consecutive motives or themes, the innovative figurations relied mainly on the pianistic possibilities and the development and technical improvement of instruments, such as the Erard mechanisms. The natural development of figuration, starting from the toccata and prelude in Bach, through the fantasies in Carl Philipp Emmanuel Bach, patterns of classical figures in Mozart, or the innovative texture in Beethoven, leads directly to the modern vertical and horizontal techniques, supported by the art of pedalling and fingering. In this regard, little could be added after the discoveries of Liszt; in the case of Wieniawski, we can only talk about an approach involving the selection and synthesis of techniques acquired both from Liszt and Chopin. Wieniawski conducts a dialogue with historical matter as well as with many cultural contexts. He formulates his own compositional strategy, referring to the established solutions in his choice and method of shaping the sound matter, kinds of piano figures applied, and textural solutions current in the sociolect of his time.

The cycle of 24 Etudes by Wieniawski is also another step in the post-Chopin tradition of the grand cyclic form, interpreted by Władysław Stróżewski as a romantic hero's journey.<sup>11</sup> Wieniawski, starting with C major and A minor, followed through all the keys of the tonal system to the key of F major, and crowned the whole with D minor. Just like Chopin and Liszt, he treated the cycle as a special kind of universe, which was the sum of his pianistic and compositional experience. The idea of diversity and multiplicity in unity also guided Liszt, whose original intention was to compose a cyclic form of forty-eight etudes. Eventually, he reduced his plans to only twelve pieces realized by the fifths, starting with the keys of C major and A minor to the final D-flat major and B minor.

Wieniawski, in shaping his musical matter, treated the cycle of etudes as a cycle of characteristic miniatures. At times he describes the connections between their nature or genre in a declarative way in words: he describes the Etude in B major as a *scherzo* – *capriccioso*, a song without words is how he characterises the Etude in G-flat major, while the Etude in C minor is seen as a *barcarolle* (*Andantino contemplativo quasi Barcarolla*), and the Etude in E major as a *scherzo*.

<sup>11</sup> Władysław Stróżewski, *Chopin i Norwid* [Chopin and Norwid], in: idem, *Wokół piękna. Szkice z estetyki* [Around the Idea of Beauty. Essays in Aesthetics], (Cracow: Universitas, 2002), 299-303.

In addition to the forms which employ evolving multi-phase or typical reprise solutions, Wieniawski also uses polyphonic forms, such as the Fugue in E-flat minor preceded by the Fantasy or Canon in E-flat major. The presence of the virtuosity archetype can also be discerned in the etude for the left hand in D major, the only one of its kind in the cycle.

These inter-genre relationships are highlighted by the wide range of idioms of musical expression, often verbalized in the text of Wieniawski's compositions. They can be divided into six categories:

1. *energico, con bravura, risoluto, con spirito, veloce;*
2. *feroce, impetuoso, agitato, con trionfo, grandioso;*
3. *con passione, pesante, patetico;*
4. *con eleganza, con grazia, brillante, con legierezza, scherzando capriccioso;*
5. *misterioso, con estasi;*
6. *religioso, contemplativo, estinto, con tristezza, perdendosi, inconsolabile.*

The inter-genre relationships, supported by the categories of musical expression given above, allow us, following many recent studies,<sup>12</sup> to indicate the topoi in Wieniawski's music which come from the Liszt tradition:

1. *appassionato agitato;*
2. *scherzo – capriccio* type;
3. melodious *bel canto*;
4. declamatory *bel canto*;
5. recitative;
6. *grandioso con trionfo*;
7. pathetic;
8. religious;
9. contemplative.

Wieniawski's composition appears to be exceptionally well-suited to contextual and intra-musical links. This involves many symbolic references, which direct the listener to a wide catalogue of expressive qualities.<sup>13</sup> What thus becomes apparent is the conscious act of fossilising formal rules of the genre, of renewing the chosen genre,<sup>14</sup> and of moving away from being closely dependent on the genre towards the creation of an individual work.

The relationship between Wieniawski's compositions and some of those by other composers (Chopin, Liszt), as well as the genres of piano music which functioned in the artistic practice and the world of Romanticism and its emotions,

<sup>12</sup> Among others: Marta Grabócz, "La Sonate en si mineur de Liszt; une stratégie narrative complexe", *Analyse Musicale* vol. 8 (1987), 64-70; Samson, *Virtuosity and the Musical Work*, 175-185; Leszek Polony, *Symbol i muzyka* [A Symbol and Music] (Cracow: Akademia Muzyczna, 2011), 225-239.

<sup>13</sup> Irena Poniatowska, *Chopin – człowiek i jego muzyka*, 129.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Zofia Mitosek, *Teorie badań literackich* [Theories of Literature Research], (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1995).

allow us to see an individual work participating in a particular artistic and social space determined by the specific codes and symbols which act as points of reference in that space.

In a number of original and outstanding cyclical compositions like the etude, some basic, primary goals are – as noted by Carl Dahlhaus – ‘lifted [...] and simultaneously absorbed into the outside world’.<sup>15</sup> After Liszt, we clearly see the reversal of hierarchical dependencies between the core of the genre and the individual work. The concert etude exemplifies the type of work which in its substance was related to historical thinking, the so-called technique from piano keyboard; however, it gradually lost this substantiality, in the search for something special and unique, entering into relations with other cultural texts. For many composers, even the concept of the etude genre becomes blurred, more and more abstract and individual, which is apparent in works by Claude Debussy, Sergey Rachmaninoff, Alexander Scriabin and Karol Szymanowski.

From a broader perspective of many contexts and the roles played by Liszt, Chopin and their successors, one of whom is undoubtedly also Józef Wieniawski, we can claim that the concert etude, usually presented in a cyclic form, is an object of value, sometimes outstanding and innovative among the works of nineteenth-century composers. It reflects the search for individual solutions in the areas of piano texture and instrumental sound, as well as offering unique ideas in performance technique and artistic interpretation. At the same time, it reveals the individual idiom and style at different periods of a composer’s development, including the later ones. We should also remember that the concert etude demonstrates specific concepts in piano teaching, still relevant in piano practice today. It is a genre which plays various roles in private and public spaces, in concert practice, both on the artistic and social plane.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Muzyka jako tekst i dzieło* [Music as Text and Composition], in: idem, *Estetyka muzyki* [Aesthetics of Music], transl. Zbigniew Skowron (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2007), 17-18.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Folke Augustini, *Die Klavieretüde im 19. Jahrhundert* (Duisburg: Gilles & Francke, 1986), 10.